1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Nevill has pointed out that besides the territory of the group which is common land, every Vedda has "within this...a subdivision of his own which compares with the manor." In this he is no doubt right, though it was only at Sitala Wanniya that we were able to trace even approximately the hunting grounds belonging to individuals, which are theirs for the whole of their life, and descend to their heirs unless voluntarily alienated with the full consent of the group. So well is private ownership in a portion of land belonging to the group recognised in this community, that a man would not hunt even on his brother's land without the latter's permission; and if game started and wounded on his own land were killed on another man's domain, the man on whose territory the animal died would be given a portion of the flesh, apparently that side of the animal which touched the ground as the animal lay dead. Among other Veddas it was said half, or more generally a quarter, of the animal belonged to the man on whose land it died.

At Sitala Wanniya we not only found particular hills regarded as the property of individuals, but besides the big cave Pihilegodagalge, which was the property of the whole group of five families, there were smaller caves which were the property of the heads of individual families to which no others would have been welcomed, even had they thought of intruding. An exception was, however, made in the case of a man's *baena* (son-in-law), who we were told would naturally come and go as he pleased.

As has been shown in the chapter on Family Life, presents are often given at marriage, and these may take the form of personal property or hills or pools. In this section we shall deal with such transfers of real property, which in normal circumstances were made only to children and sons-in-law, and even then were not made over without the assent of every adult male member of the group. As this difficult subject does not lend itself to a general description, we shall limit ourselves to giving actual instances of land transfer with which we became acquainted.

When Vela of Sitala Wanniya married a woman of Bingoda his father-in-law gave him a piece of land in Marniye *pangua*

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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425 with a hill on it containing a cave called Marniyegalge and a number of *bambara* colonies. He was also given a number of
431 pools in a river in Damenegama[1].
583 Handuna of Godatalawa on his marriage was given a hill with a cave in it called Balatgalagalge. This was handed over to him by his father-in-law and the gift carried with it the sole right to take rock honey on the hill, which was known to be the home of six swarms of *bambara*. Kaira Hudubandar son-in-law of Handuna of Godatalawa received on his first marriage a big pool in the Tota Oya river.

When Kumi the sister of the Vidane of Bandaraduwa married Tissahami, the bride's parents made over to her the hill Rajahele near Walimbagala, upon which there were about ten *bambara* colonies. Kumi also received Nalle Kotanwala, a stretch or pool—we could not determine which—in the Kalugal Oya. They also gave her husband the hill called Kuda Rasahele upon which six combs of the rock bee were known.

When Badapisi married, her father gave her husband Sinawa a hill called Bala Attahele on which there were known to be eight *bambara* colonies and a pool called Adanewala in the Kalugal Oya.

Tissahami the Vidane of Bandaraduwa received on his marriage the hill Maha Yakini Hela, upon which there were over twenty known *bambara* colonies[2].

With regard to these gifts of land we must record that although a man divides his landed property equally between his children in preparation for his death, property given at marriage to a son-in-law is counted as the daughter's share when the time comes for a man to make his final disposition.

423 When the land belonging to a Vedda group was not defined by natural features, such as a stream or hill, a mark representing a man with a drawn bow was cut upon the trunks of trees along the boundary line. It is doubtful whether these marks are

[1] We believe this was a small stream, and the right to fish in it was not highly valued, partly perhaps because not many fish were caught, but also because Veddas do not often eat fish when they can get other flesh.

[2] The numbers of colonies of rock bees mentioned in these accounts are probably inaccurate, except perhaps in the case of the Bandaraduwa hills, for most Veddas became confused when attempting to count above five or six.

[602]

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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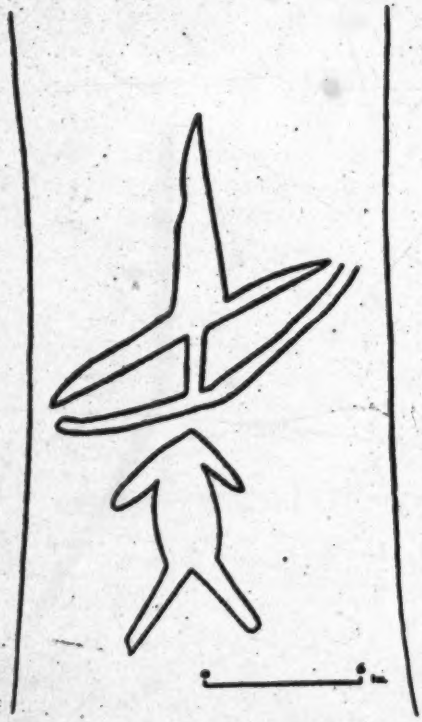
made at the present day, but Handuna readily cut with his axe the mark shown in Plate XXII, figure 2, and of which a drawing to scale is given in text figure 6. 423

The sign of transfer of a hill, pool, or piece of land, was a stone; we heard of this from so many independent sources that we have no doubt that this was formerly the universal custom, 425



[423]

Fig. 6. Boundary mark.

but it was not until we reached Sitala Wanniya that we found people among whom this sign of land transfer was still in vogue. Here Handuna showed us a stone—a water-worn quartz pebble about the size of a filbert—which he assured us represented the "seisin" of his hunting ground. Besides one or more stones a tooth was commonly given to the new owner by the man handing over the land, but this was not essential, and if the

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

425 donor had not kept his old teeth as they fell out no attempt was made to find a substitute[1].

425 428 It was said that sometimes the donor would add his flint and steel to the stone and tooth; we believe, though we are not certain, that this was only done when land was passed as the result of a death, in which case a lock of hair from the head of the dying man was added to the other objects and became a most important part of the "seisin." The lock of hair would only be cut from the head of the sick or dying man at his own request by the man to whom his land would pass, who would cut the lock with an arrow. It was necessary that the sick man should be conscious and that he should himself give the lock to his heir, to whom he might say, "If there is any dispute after my death show this to whoever gives you trouble." Plate XXIII represents the "seisin" of certain land at Damenegama given by the last Vedda of the group to whom the land in question belonged, to the father of Tissahami the Vedda Arachi referred to on p. 41. The "seisin" here shown consists of a lock of hair, a tooth, a metal strike-a-light and a piece of milky quartz. All these objects were sent for our inspection in an old Kandyan embroidered betel bag in which it was said they were always kept, but we had no opportunity of discussing their significance with the Arachi and thus cannot say whether the quartz stone belongs to the strike-a-light or is an essential part of the "seisin." It was explained that a Vedda would not give land to a Sinhalese under ordinary circumstances, but only when a Vedda is the last of his folk and knows not where to turn for food and shelter. The father of the Arachi only obtained the Damenegama land because the last of the local Veddas was a very old man, so forlorn and feeble that he could no longer provide for himself and his wife. He accordingly made over his land to the father of the Arachi, in return for food and shelter for the rest of his and his wife's days. Probably the fact that the man who took over the land had Vedda blood in his veins and had always associated with the Veddas made the transaction easier.

[1] Teeth are generally kept. Some of the older Veddas were literally very "long in the tooth"; as the gums recede in old age the teeth loosen and fall out (*pyorrhœa alveolaris*).

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

●425
428
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Plate XXIII

Seisin consisting of hair, tooth, quartz fragment, and strike-a-light

[facing p. 114]